



Mark Zaccaria for Congress

The Name of the Game

An Op-Ed Piece by Mark Zaccaria

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You know there's a game on when you see the players making all their best inside moves. That's as true on the football field as it is on the campaign trail.

This season I'm running for Rhode Island's Second District seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. I'm the Republican challenging four term incumbent, James Langevin. I'm running because I feel that our government has gotten too large to be what our country's founders really had in mind. Because I'm running I have organized a series of positions on all the issues of the day and I've spelled them out for anyone who will listen.

Getting that message out has been the greatest challenge. For 28 straight weeks I've sent out an E-Newsletter that now goes to almost 6,000 here in Rhode Island, and beyond. I've accepted invitations to speak before neighborhood groups of as few as four or five, and as many as I can get. I have also constantly updated my web site, **www.markz4ri.org**.

Despite all that I think that the voters of Cranston, Warwick, Westerly, and Glocester need to be able to compare the two options they have. Then folks like you in Coventry, South Kingstown, Richmond, and the rest of the District can make an informed decision. It's up to you to decide who you want casting your votes in the U.S. House. To do that you have to get a look at the two candidates and hear what they have to say.

That's why I started working with my opponent last July to schedule a series of public-forum styled events where we could offer our differing views on the way forward for the federal government. The idea was to give voters a chance to see and evaluate their candidates. Unfortunately it was not an idea that met with much favor from the incumbent.

Electoral politics can be played as a game. Mr. Langevin has clearly demonstrated that. He has vaguely acknowledged that 'Debates' should take place but then dodged every specific proposal of where, when, and how it should happen. The reason is simple, really. Everyone knows his name. Everyone

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knows his story. I don't think enough of us have really evaluated his record but if he stays away from any joint public appearances they won't get much of a chance to, anyway.

Your present Representative is playing a political game. Sadly, it's a game he has a reasonable chance to win. He could slide right back into the seat for another two years just by keeping his head down and avoiding any public appearances and any public statements. Then the voters would only have Name Recognition to fall back on. It's just like the Flea Flicker in football. It's all Razzle-Dazzle but when it works, it works big-time.

What concerns me most about this strategy is the disrespect it shows for you, the voters we each hope to represent in the next congressional session.

Does my opponent feel that he takes too great a risk if he faces those he represents in an open forum, where they get to decide who to hire for the next term? Is he afraid to be asked just why he voted this way, or that on any given bill?

Just this week my opponent's Press Secretary, Joy Fox, issued a statement on all this. In it she cited an upcoming joint appearance at the North Kingstown High School as evidence of her boss's willingness to let the people decide.

I'll be there on October 16th. I certainly hope my opponent will be. As a local contender in North Kingstown in past campaigns I have been very impressed with the Candidates' Day program put on by faculty member, Larry Verria. It's a wonderful way for high school students to get a feel for the responsibilities of citizenship they will soon be assuming. There will be an audience of 700 – 800 to hear us answer questions from the floor.

There will even be a handful of those NKHS Students who are old enough to vote.

If I were a cynic I would suggest Ms. Fox knew that however her boss performed that day it would make little difference at the ballot box.

I recognize that I have an up-hill battle if I am going to win this seat. My approach to that fight is to lay out my credentials to voters so they can choose. If I am lucky enough to be selected to represent you in the next two years, I promise you one thing for sure: In the 2010 Campaign I will hold a public forum or debate in each of the 20 cities or towns that make up the District. I will invite any and all opposing candidates to join me and I will look my constituents in the eye as I point to what I have done in my first term as evidence that they should seriously consider me for a second.

That's the way it should be done.